A

LETTER

TO

DAVID GARRICK, Esq.

ON HIS CONDUCT

AS

PRINCIPAL MANAGER AND ACTOR

AT DRURY-LANE.

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LETTER

TO

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BRITISH MUSEUM
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THE following Letter has lain by the author at leaſt three months, to avoid the conſequences of precipitance; and in hopes of leiſure to give the materials in it that method, arrangement and elegance which he would aim at in every thing deſigned for public inſpection. But his engagements are ſuch, that he muſt either ſuppreſs what he thinks will be of uſe; or offer it in the very form and words of a firſt copy. When he ſaw advertiſed 'The Theatres diſſected,' he hoped that the buſineſs of animadverſion was taken off his hands.

He

ADVERTISEMENT.

He was ſorry to be in a great meaſure diſappointed; and the more ſo, as it was evidently the fault, not the misfortune of the author. If his Poem had been carefully reviſed, and cleared of its rubbiſh: if the ſallies of paſſion had been ſeparated from thoſe of poetry; and all invective and indiſcriminate abuſe ſuppreſſed, it would have been the beſt poem publiſhed in Engliſh ſince the death of Churchill. —— As far as the Poet is actuated by a regard to public manners, and a love of the Drama, the author of the Letter would wiſh to cooperate with him. Where he is abuſive, he drops him—The reader will find in the Letter ſeveral facts alluded to, which have been taken notice of in the Poem. The author might have paſſed over ſome of them after having ſeen the Poem,

if

if he could have written over his Letter again. The co-incidence of these facts, the accounts of which must have been had from very different quarters, are good proofs of their authenticity and truth.

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TO

DAVID GARRICK, Esq.

SIR,

MY buſineſs with you is of ſome importance; and yet I ſhould not have addreſſed you in the manner I now do, if I had not found you peculiarly circumſtanced, and enjoying a privilege in the preſent literary world, which no other man, I believe, ever thought of obtaining; and which ought to be made known, to the honour of your invention, and for the many public advantages which may ariſe from it. Nothing can afford a better hint to adminiſtration: and if you had made it

public, it would have ſaved them money, vexation, and the diſgrace of an unſucceſsful conteſt with the meaneſt of political writers.

The News-papers have been for ſome time the vehicles of knowledge. Every man who ſteps out of the croud, has his character inſerted in them; and is held out to public obſervation, generally with more wit than truth, and with more ill-nature than either. It often occurred to me as extraordinary, when every man diſtinguiſhed by rank, fortune or talents, was ſhot at from ſome dark corner, that you were ſuffered to go on your way not only without moleſtation, but with conſtant applauſe. I am willing to think, I did not dwell on this circumſtance, and endeavour to account for it, becauſe I am not ill-natured. I conſidered it as a piece of good-fortune; and rejoiced that a man of merit was ſo happy in it. What is called an accident gave me the firſt hint of that anxious and unwearied

wearied artifice, which I am ſorry to exhibit in an oppoſite point of view to your art of imitation. I hope men will not deſpiſe you for the one, as they have juſtly admired you for the other. I happened to call on an acquaintance juſt as he had been diſappointed of a ſhare in one of the news-papers, by your having ſecured it to yourſelf. I expreſſed my ſurprize at your attention to ſo trifling an object as the profits of ſuch a ſhare. His anſwer was, that you were inſatiably avaricious. I was then totally unacquainted with your character: I readily ſuppoſed avarice to be your motive: and felt ſome regret that you ſhould be avaricious.——Having lately had ſeveral things to ſay to you, and thinking the preſent faſhionable method of ſaying them the moſt convenient, I was not a little ſurprized to find myſelf ſo much reſtrained. Only two papers would receive any thing in which you were mentioned with blame. 'What 'can this mean? Is the real Sovereign 'of this mighty empire daily traduced?

'Are the moſt ſacred receſſes of his 'family broken into and miſrepreſented; 'and the tendereſt feelings of his heart 'inhumanly tortured? — And is this 'mimic ſovereign ſurrounded by enchant-'ment?—Shall men, whoſe virtues are 'an honour to humanity, have their 'little follies and imperfections diſtorted 'into vices, and made the means of 'their diſgrace? And muſt not that 'man be animadverted upon, who when 'he puts off the character which he imi-'tates from the poet, puts off moſt of 'his virtues, and is ſaid to be in him-'ſelf as much beneath the common 'ſtandard of humanity, as in borrowed 'characters he appears above it?' While I was thus railing at the diſpoſition of things, I diſcovered the cauſe. You are a proprietor in ſeveral papers, and upon ſuch terms with the proprietors of others, that they muſt not diſoblige you. I can now account for what I had ſuppoſed your good-fortune; and I no longer wonder, that your name is ever inſerted with honor. Hence, I am afraid, the

inimitable

inimitable Mr. Garrick, the *faultleſs* actor, the *Great Roſcius*; and hence, that intire freedom from cenſure which could have been obtained no other way.

You will ſee, by and by, that I mean not to detract from your merit. The moſt extravagant vanity could never have ſuggeſted to you, that you were entirely without faults as an *actor*. I took in your praiſes with my mother's milk; and I always ſaw you with a prepoſſeſſion in your favor. Yet I have often known you fail of expreſſing the ſenſe of important paſſages: I have heard you repeat many beautiful lines in the meaſured tone of the ſtage: and have been exceedingly hurt at your tricks to catch applauſe from the audience. I have heard theſe things objected to you in private companies: and, among many impertinent criticiſms, I have known ſome juſt remarks made on your playing, which would not have given you pleaſure. It could not therefore be owing to a general opinion of your being

being faultleſs, that you eſcaped the laſh of cenſure. Indeed perfection, if you had poſſeſſed it, would have been a reaſon why envy would have attacked you. It is now ſuppoſed you knew the world well enough to judge in this manner betimes: and it is ſaid with pleaſure, by perſons perhaps of leſs candor than judgment, that inſtead of improving your moral feelings, and amuſing yourſelf with conſcious virtue and conſcious merit, you determined to prevent reproach, and to enjoy in appearance, a fame without blemiſh. — I am afraid your dream is over. Many perſons ſeem diſpoſed to diſturb your tranquil poſſeſſion of thoſe honors, which they ſay you have obtained by unjuſtifiable means. They would make you, at leaſt taſte of that cup, which they would always have had in your hand. They ſay, 'You have had your 'good things in this world; other and 'better people have had their evil 'things. It never was the good for-'tune of any man to enjoy the preſent

'and

'and the future. That poſterity to
'which men of merit look forward for
'a juſt and honourable name, will be
'looking back on that which you had
'formed to yourſelf; and ſeeing the
'meanneſs with which you ſecured it,
'will acknowledge your real praiſe with
'reluctance; and either tear off your
'laurels in indignation, or ſuffer them
'to wither and die in neglect.'——
What can be ſaid to theſe things? Would to God, I could defend you! Perhaps you may be able to defend yourſelf. The faireſt fruit of your labors, a great and good name, greatly depend on your attempt.

It is allowed on all hands, that you commenced an Actor, with uncommon powers for the ſtage; and though they were confined (as all human powers are) within certain limits, yet you were with juſtice pronounced a genius, and of the firſt claſs. When you had obtained a conſiderable degree of public favor, and ſtood candidate for a ſhare of thoſe

emoluments

emoluments which it conferred, the principal management of our theatrical amuſements was in the hands of Mr. Rich, who will ever be regarded as the God of Pantomimes, Jubilee, and Inſtallations. Like an able general, entering the field againſt one as able, but of a different genius, you never met Rich on his own ground. You knew he was as much ſuperior to you in fancy and a taſte for magnificence, as you were to him in the talents of a good actor. You therefore drew together the powers of the Muſes; and under the banners of Nature, declared war againſt the exuberance of Fancy and the enchantment of the Arts. You harangued the public accordingly, when you entered on your management.

* 'Tis yours this night to bid the reign commence
Of reſcu'd nature, and reviving ſenſe:
To chace the charms of *ſound*, the pomp of *ſhow*,
For uſeful mirth and ſalutary woe;
Bid ſcenic virtue form the riſing age,
And truth diffuſe her radiance from the ſtage.

What

* Prologue, ſpoken by Mr. Garrick on the commencement of his management.

What your ſucceſs has been in this conteſt, is too well known to need a detail. You conquered, as all heroes have done, by great and uſeful talents; but like almoſt all heroes, you are ſinking into the vices of the vanquiſhed: There are ſeveral circumſtances, however, in your caſe, of a peculiar nature. After a conſiderable exertion of abilities, and the fatigue attending the accompliſhment of a great deſign, men naturally give way to a relaxation; but it is of a liberal kind; and we love the hero in his weakneſſes, whom we have admired in his exploits. In you we ſee the ſame unremitting ardor which actuated your youth; the ſame emulation; the ſame jealouſy; and we conſider you, as we would a man who wiſhes to have a day without its evening.—But I muſt proceed more diſagreeably. Nature had given you the means of acquiring an honeſt fame, by a fair and juſt diſplay of your talents. This was your riſe;—this ſhould have been your dependance. But you no ſooner found yourſelf ad-

vancing in the public eſteem, but you formed with the ruins of others, the very ground on which you exalted yourſelf. You induſtriouſly employed every method, both publicly and privately, to depreciate the merits, and to magnify the faults of your cotemporaries of the ſtage. No man can doubt your having powers of mimickry;—but their object ſhould never have been to obtain a comparative preference to yourſelf; by giving diſtorted images, and forming perſonal caricatura's of your brethren. It is well known that *Quin* has long been the object of theſe illiberal and diſhoneſt attempts. You will find that his merit has the ſtamp of truth; and that his fame is invulnerable. But others of inferior degree, though of conſiderable merit, have been moſt eſſentially injured; and ſome have been totally ruined. I dare ſay at this moment, you perfectly recollect the caſes of *Ryan*, *Delane*, *Hallam*, *Bridgwater*, *Giffard*, *Sparks*, *Sheridan*, &c. This ſpecies of robbery on the reputation of

actors,

actors, with the ſeveral injurious conſequences attending it, had ſuch an effect on the mind of poor *Delane* (a man by many degrees your ſuperior in birth, education, fortune and character) that it abſolutely occaſioned his death.

It is evidently your object to monopolize the reputation and wealth of the ſtage. For whenever a brother of the buſkin or ſock has the ill-luck to be mentioned with commendation for his public talents, or with eſteem for his private virtues, his figure, his geſtures, his face, his voice are ſtretched on the rack of ridicule; his private character is ſtabbed by a miſrepreſented anecdote, or an exaggerated foible. Hence the diſtorted views we have had of Mrs. Yates, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Smith, and other performers of great excellence. Nay, ſuch a foe are you to merit in others, that it hurts even your intereſt: how elſe can we account for your having made Mr. and Mrs. Barry, Mr. King, Mrs. Abingdon, Mr. Moody,

Mr. Aickin, Mrs. Baddely, Mr. Brereton, performers of great merit on your own theatre, the objects of your ſevereſt ridicule? And all this appears to be only for the entertainment of thoſe *fools of quality*, who having neither ſenſe nor underſtanding to judge for themſelves, are led by faſhion to pay an implicit belief to whatever comes from the *dear mouth of the wonderful Garrick*. But it is the genuine effect of that principle which has ever ſwayed you; and into which we may trace almoſt all the ſprings of your actions.

That you ſhould get poſſeſſion of the ſtage; and raiſe yourſelf to great eminence, by means of uncommon talents; that your maſterly manner of expreſſing the ſentiments and exhibiting the characters of our immortal Shakſpear ſhould make you the favourite of the public, was not ſurprizing. But that under your management the ſtage ſhould decline; that there ſhould be on your theatre a greater want of good actors than

than was ever known; and this owing to your management, is to many a kind of paradox. To others, it is owing to the times: no genuiſes ariſe; and the *great Roſcius* will ſoon walk alone in the higher parts of the Drama (the very thing he wants) and all the inferior wretches muſt be huddled in proceſſions and raree-ſhows. In general, I believe, your bad conduct as a manager is attributed to your vanity, and your avarice; to the former, becauſe you would not endure a rival; to the latter, becauſe you would not pay him in proportion to his merits. — I attribute it almoſt wholly to the former, becauſe it is your ruling paſſion. For though your general character is that of avarice; and I know you to be covetous enough to deſerve all the contempt which is thrown on you; yet your avarice is the ſlave of your vanity. A Jew might thrive among the ſharpeſt of his fellows with your love of money and dexterity in accumulating it; yet your avarice is a puny vice to your vanity, which directs

every

every motion of your mind with abſolute controul. Ambition is the vice of noble minds. I mean not to ſay, that your's has not qualities that are noble: at leaſt, it can imitate thoſe that are ſo. Prudence is alſo the effect of wiſdom. But when ambition runs into vanity; and prudence degenerates into fraud, they become vices; and we deſpiſe and deteſt them in proportion to their influence.

In you, the vice in queſtion, is not only offenſive, as it makes your private character ridiculous; but it is pernicious as it affects the public. I have laughed perhaps, when I have heard the extravagant things you have ſaid of yourſelf, 'that you wiſhed to retire, if 'ſome ſuperior genius were to ariſe— 'that it was ridiculous in any other man 'to talk of *drawing* houſes: that no 'one ever did ſo but yourſelf!' I ſometimes heſitated at giving credit to theſe things, though I had them from perſons of veracity who heard them from yourſelf. They were not only

fooliſh

fooliſh but falſe. You certainly draw full houſes (though I ſhall tell you by and by that you do ſo by fineſſe as well as by merit) but you are not the only one that has had that teſtimony of public favour. I have read of *Booth*, *Wilks*, *Quin*, and *Cibber*. *Moſſop* in Zanga, Bajazet, and even in Richard a favourite part of your own, has literally drawn great houſes; when he was under your *management*; and you took care that no art ſhould be uſed to heighten his ſucceſs.——Theſe things I have only heard of. I ſhall make your heart ake when I ſay—I have ſeen Mrs. *Cibber*; and that when ſhe played Ophelia, Alicia, Juliet, &c. even you were almoſt forgotten. *Weſton* and *Macklin* ſo lately as this ſeaſon have brought prodigious crouds to the Hay-market and Covent-garden. Mrs. *Yates* in any of her capital parts, infallibly draws a full houſe; and if ſhe were ſuffered to play but ſeldom; to chuſe her time, and place her foils of bad actors in the manner you do, might

enter

enter the field againſt you, with an appearance which you would wonder at. Mrs. *Barry* would have the ſame ſucceſs, in the ſame manner; for her powers are very great; — but ſhe is under your management; and you will make her drudge away her reputation.

I mean not to draw a compariſon between you and any of the actors I have named.—But it has juſt occurred to me, that you can mean no leſs in the abſurd ſpeeches you make than to induce people to imagine, that you are ſuperior to any one who ever appeared on the ſtage. This, I am afraid, you have ſaid of yourſelf a thouſand times, in the public papers. Be that as it may, I have ever been one of thoſe who have thought ſuch paragraphs falſe as they were diſguſtful.—The criterion by which I judge of an actor, is the degree of power he has of making me forget that he is one. This Mrs. Cibber poſſeſſed in a greater degree than any one I ever ſaw. I have often thought her

actually

actually mad;—and when ſhe breathed the ſoft and diſtreſsful accents of an unhappy love;—ſhe occupied my heart ſo entirely; ſhe faſcinated my eyes; and it was impoſſible I ſhould imagine myſelf but in the very ſpot where the poet had placed her.——I have felt the higheſt admiration when I have ſeen you in your capital parts: but it has been only admiration. Nothing but nature could well exceed many of your imitations;—— and Mrs. Cibber was nature. She felt the paſſions in the higheſt degree; they tuned her voice and ſhaped her countenance. You model your's by an art; but you do ſo like an able artiſt. Hence the difference in the univerſality of your talents. She entered only on thoſe parts for which nature had formed her; and expreſſed the paſſions which ſhe felt. Your heart was very differently formed: you had no paſſions which could reſtrain your imitative faculty: nature had given you a good voice; features which you could

throw into various forms; and an eye, which eſpecially at a diſtance, you could manage to vaſt advantage. Like a capital artiſt, you could imitate all around you; and the imitations were often truly wonderful:—but you could not *actually* expreſs what you *never felt*; and Mrs. Cibber ſaying from her heart,

'Where is the beauteous majeſty of Denmark?'

was, to a perſon of real ſenſibility, worth all the happy grimace which was ever made by man.

You may now double your diligence in injuring the memory of this excellent Actreſs. I ſuſpect you have been thus employed; for it has ſome time been the language of thoſe wits who take their ſentiments from you, 'Mrs. Cibber 'had great powers, but ſhe whined at 'laſt; and ſhe walked with her elbows 'ſtuck to her ſides.'—She might have tied her hands behind her, as boys do

in

in engagements at ſchools, and yet excelled all the world.

I repeat it with the greateſt ſincerity, that I mean not to detract from your real praiſe. I ſpeak from my heart, when I ſay Mrs. Cibber affected it the moſt of any perſon I ever ſaw on the ſtage. — But I may have erred in calling her an actreſs. She expreſſed a few paſſions in their natural tone; but they were her own conſtitutional ones; tho' happily delineated by the poet. She had nothing to do with any to which nature had made her a ſtranger.—An Actor is different; as will be readily admitted if we keep our eye a moment on two points of perfect oppoſition. Let us imagine Mrs. Cibber in Juliet;—and Reddiſh in Romeo:—ſhe—a very Juliet in ſenſibility and love; he—a man without one of the tender feelings of the heart; yet *acting*, as it is called; ſubſtituting grimace for expreſſion; ſpeaking the words of deſpair, and looking the

expreſſion of fury; and dying with an —Oh—and a twitch;—and a ſprawl, as he would have done in any other caſe whatſoever.—I mean this, as making the wideſt difference poſſible between a meer Actor, and Mrs. Cibber. If I had placed you, it would have been to ſhew the leaſt difference poſſible. I have ſeen you in the very part; when Mrs. Cibber was Juliet; and I will venture to ſay, that no perſon in the houſe, capable of feeling the play, was inſenſible to the difference in you. Nothing could exceed her tender and natural expreſſion; nothing could well exceed your ſtudied and correct imitation.—This you may be inclined to repreſent as refinement and falſe criticiſm. Others will think differently; and will be intirely convinced, that I have made a diſtinction, only where there is a difference, when they are aſſured you *act* in a room as well as in the theatre; and that you ſpeak to a poſt with the ſame feelings and expreſſion, as to the lovelieſt Juliet

under

under heaven. This is a matter of notoriety. It is what you have valued yourſelf upon; and pronounced every man incapable of becoming an actor, who is not in this manner abſolutely independant of circumſtances.

However this be, I judge you out of your mouth. You are a meer actor. You affect to feel where you do not; and you imitate tones, looks, and geſtures, while your heart is at eaſe. This ſhould heighten our opinion of you as an artiſt, whatever we might think of you as a man. I believe you are not generally judged of in this manner. It is not difficult to impoſe on the world. Very awkward copies paſs for originals, and we need not wonder that a maſter ſhould ſucceed in the deception.

I let you know my ſentiments on this ſubject, becauſe I think they may be of ſervice to you. I have been ſurprized

and

and grieved at what you have ſaid of your own talents. Can you ſeriouſly, ſuppoſe an Actor the moſt honourable and the moſt uſeful character in the community? And can you have the face to ſay that you are the firſt genius of that profeſſion? Theſe things would be incredible, if not atteſted by all your moſt intimate friends. And they are attended with miſchief to yourſelf and to the public. They make you appear often ridiculous as a man; your friends daily undergo the violent tranſitions of admiration and contempt; and love muſt be a ſtranger to every breaſt that approaches you. But this vanity is importantly hurtful to the public. To this it is owing that your invention is for ever employed to make yourſelf the ſole object of public notice. Inſtead of calling to your aſſiſtance talents ſimilar to your own, cheriſhing them when near you, and yielding with real juſtice their proportion of the rewards you receive; you are ſuppoſed to look upon opening

merit

merit with the eye of a baſiliſk, to ſuffer any degrees of it on the ſtage with reluctance, and even to diſtreſs and embarraſs it with an artfulneſs, of which I can ſuppoſe you are an eminent maſter. Your vanity, Sir, is the reaſon aſſigned by men of ſenſe and moderation for the ſtrange conduct you have obſerved as a manager. You are called upon by a real friend, to offer a better reaſon for yourſelf; and to give the public ſatisfaction on the following queſtions.—— Why is Mr. Barry made to appear in characters, for which his age muſt now diſqualify him; and why not in others, where it could be no objection? Is it becauſe you would exhibit to the public the ruins of an excellent actor? That you would deſtroy, by his preſent imperfections, that reputation which he formerly gained, and which you ſuppoſe may interfere with your own?— Why are ſome of the principal characters in Shakeſpear but ſeldom ſeen; or filled up by Reddiſh; of whom you have

have expreſſed contempt as an actor, and abhorrence as a man? Is it becauſe you can get Reddiſh cheap? Or is it, that you would tantalize the public, and make us regret what we have ſeen in yourſelf?—Is he the beſt you can procure?—In your method of proceeding, it would not be wonderful that this ſhould be the caſe. No man of real talents and of a liberal education, would now make the ſtage his choice. Beſides the remains of that unjuſt reproach which has ever lain on the profeſſion itſelf, the treatment which every man muſt expect to meet with from you, muſt keep back almoſt all degrees of merit. Your excuſe in this caſe would be your crime.—But why is Mr. Moſſop unemployed? Why are not ſome ſteps taken to engage him? He is already embarked in the profeſſion, and a man of unqueſtionable merit. I ſpeak this on the ſtrongeſt preſumption, that of public opinion, for I have not ſeen him myſelf. He is every where ſpoken of

with

with admiration as an actor, and eſteem as a man. — To what can this ungenerous neglect be owing? — Not to his private vices; for he is every where univerſally reſpected. —— Here, he is remembered with the greateſt eſteem, though it be many years ſince the public have once had an opportunity of ſeeing him. He was a favorite actor, even when you was in the zenith of your reputation, and when he was only a ſtripling, ſubject to your *management*. He engaged in Dublin as a manager: but the ſtate of theatrical affairs there has been ſuch, that he could not eſcape the too common fate of an Iriſh manager. He is detained here by a misfortune, which will probably make him ſick of management. It is not unlikely that he will be glad to employ his talents for the entertainment of the public, upon ſuch terms as you ought to propoſe to him. He is now in the prime of life; has had conſiderable experience; and is the firſt

actor now living in his extenſive walk; the public expects him; he is miſerably wanted; and there are many of the principal plays in our language which you cannot attempt to exhibit without his performance: viz. *Coriolanus*, *Henry 8th*, *Richard 3d*, *Revenge*, *King John*, *Meaſure for Meaſure*, *Diſtreſſed Mother*, *Venice preſerved*, *Cato*, *Don Sebaſtian*, *Barbaroſſa*, *Creuſa*, *Comus*, *Orphan of China*, *Agis*, *Virginia*, *All for Love*. Beſides, the characters of *Oſman*, *Bajazet*, *Shore*, *Maſkwell*, *Oſmyn*, *Perſeus*, *Hotſpur*, *Proſpero*, and many others, which, however attempted by others, can be performed only, as I am told, by Mr. Moſſop.

You may imagine, it is not of importance whether your company conſiſts of good or bad actors, ſo long as you keep the principal parts in your own eye, and reſerve them for yourſelf.—This leads me into a diſagreeable ſubject. — The ravages of Time are always melancholy; eſpecially

eſpecially on the fineſt and nobleſt of the works of God in this world, the human frame. That univerſal deſtroyer, it is true, has been favourable in his depredations upon you, and has left you a vivacity and flow of ſpirits which few young men can boaſt of. And judging of you, even now, by the rule you want to eſtabliſh, that of contraſt, you appear very great on your own theatre. You are certainly right to guard well the fag-end of your reputation; it is very liable to be mangled. The effect of contraſt is great; and by excluding genius from the ſtage, you may long have the ſatisfaction of being allowed to be the beſt in a variety of walks; and, while nothing natural appears in others, your very faults will be ranked with your perfections; your graſp of your forehead; your ſtrange twitches; and your meaſured pronunciation, will be all excellence, and Garrick and Nature will be ſynonymous terms. This is already pretty much the Maccaroni language.

On this principle therefore you do well to exclude from your theatre, Moſſop, Macklin, Yates, Woodward, Shuter, &c. But you will be diſappointed of your end.—The weakeſt and moſt uninformed minds only, judge intirely by compariſon. The intelligent mind has an internal ſtandard of excellence, by which it eſtimates merit; and ſees truth in its own light; and not as it is ſhadowed and magnified by any errors around it.

You ſtand not in need of this artifice to obtain your real ſhare of praiſe. You have been, deſervedly, for above thirty years, at the head of your profeſſion; for I hardly think Mrs. Cibber of that profeſſion. The juſtice with which you conceive, and exhibit the poet's meaning, are in general maſterly. You act with much greater truth, ſpirit, and variety, than any man I ever ſaw. This I hold to be giving you your due praiſe; and your utmoſt praiſe. As for the

phraſes,

phraſes, 'Mr. Garrick is out of the queſtion! Mr. Garrick is the very thing! No criticiſm can reach him! His powers are equal to any thing!'—I look upon them either to be echoed, almoſt, from your mouth, by thoſe ſmall wits who are ever about you; or the feeble and unmeaning ſentiments of our preſent race of *beaux eſprits*. — It may be ſaid, I take you at a diſadvantage in the decline of life. I believe not. In thoſe tragic parts where your organs ſeem to have had a power, almoſt peculiar, to repreſent the poet's meaning, your execution is maſterly. It is much improved on what it was ſome years ago. You have quitted ſome of your ſtage-tricks; and your judgment, I ſuppoſe, has made your action much more chaſte, and much nearer truth. Some habits you will never ſhake off; and ſome will increaſe upon you. But, I was going to obſerve, that your province lies principally where the paſſions are exhibited by the poet, as agitated, or wrought up to a high

high degree; your perfection conſiſts *in the extreme*; in exaggerated geſture, and ſudden burſts of paſſion, given in a ſuppreſſed and under manner, where the extenſive powers of voice are not required; you are inimitable. In the ſtruggles and conflicts of contradictory paſſions; or in their mixture and combination; and when their effects are drawn by the author to a point of inſtant and momentary expreſſion; — there you are often excellent. But where the ſituation of the mind implies a continued agitation, you become defective. And in all ſimple, unmixed paſſions; in all the ſmaller degrees of expreſſion; and in conveying that *various* proportion of pathos which various cauſes require; in theſe caſes, you are no longer *yourſelf*; the expreſſion muſt be *in extreme*, or you are not *Garrick*. There is a nicety and refinement in marking the gradation of the pathos; and in the wearing away of one paſſion into another. This may be illuſtrated by an expreſſion of Shake-

ſpear

ſpear (though on a different occaſion) *The morning ſteals upon the night, melting the darkneſs.* In this beauty, ſo eſſential in ſome characters, you ever have been, and ever will be defective. In all degrees below the extreme, your geſture, and every ſpecies of expreſſion, is what the French call *trop chargè.* The *naïvetè* or *ſimplicity of nature* you have always been a ſtranger to. You almoſt always preſent your whole face, and the broad glare of your eye, to the audience. I have been highly provoked at many ſuch improprieties; eſpecially as I could have ſworn you were actuated wholly by vanity, and inſulting us in the wrong place, with a *full view of the wonderful Garrick.*

But I have been led further in this way, than I firſt intended. I ſuſpect you of an error, which I muſt animadvert upon, becauſe it is a very extraordinary one; and keeps you in that conduct as a manager, for which you

are

are ſo much blamed by the public. While *Lear*, *Mackbeth*, *Lucignan*, and even *Richard*, are ſeldom or ever performed, you come out often in *Don Felix*, *Ranger*, *Archer*, &c.—What can this mean? Do you think you are not growing old? Or can you imagine, it does not appear that you do? You paint yourſelf well; and you move with quickneſs: but rouge and powder cannot give the bloom of youth; and meer quickneſs of motion cannot give the appearance of agility. In your figure, the lines of beauty or of youth are either ſwollen or ſunk; and you have wholly quitted them in your movements. An old man, let him move ever ſo briſkly, moves in ſtraight lines, and turns almoſt at right angles: a young one in waving lines; and though ever ſo ſlowly, ſhews his power of moving faſter. In Ranger, you mount the ladder faſt enough; too faſt; perhaps from a deſire of appearing active. Yet if there were not an inch of your face to be ſeen, I

ſhould

ſhould gueſs nearly at your age.—But your face:—I am ſorry to look into it, when you perſonate the tender and amorous youth. *Your wrinkled viſage and lack-luſtre eye*, ſhould never be held out on ſuch occaſions. Your eyes have loſt the power of imitating ſoftneſs, if they ever had it. That fine, bewitching liquid, which paſſion ſends out to the eye of youth, cannot be imitated by any old man. The eyes of age expreſs only experience, cunning, and watchfulneſs. When you have a raree-ſhew to exhibit; and you peep, from your hole under the ſtage, as a ſpider from his receſs; when you dart your glances to every part of that web, by which you would deceive and amuſe the public; when you catch half-views of an audience you inſult; ſhew a mingled anxiety and conſciouſneſs of guilt; and pop in at your hole, from fear of being hiſſed;—then you ſhew what your looks might effect, if you employed them in proper characters. In *Shylock*, you might

yet gain immortal praiſe; but, for God's ſake, let love, and tenderneſs, and ſoftneſs alone: you never could have been eminent for them: you have now loſt the poſſibility of affecting them. When you move the chair after Violante, we ſee you in profile; and all your defects ſtrike us. Your mouth has no ſweetneſs; your voice is growing hoarſe and hollow; your dimples are furrows; a coarſe and diſguſtful dew-lap hangs from your chin; your lips have loſt their ſoftneſs and pliability; the upper eſpecially is raiſed all at once, like one turgid piece of leather; when to ſpeak the word *love*, they ought to be all ſweetly agitated, and appear like a fine ſurface gently ruffled by a breeze.

I will not purſue you through all your youthful characters; they are all offenſive; and you would be hiſſed, if people did not kindly remember what you have been; and you did not take care to keep the ſtage clear of any tolerable actor in thoſe

thoſe parts. I do not wiſh you to quit the ſtage. Keep on it by all means, as long as poſſible. Lear you will perform better every year for ten years to come; ſo you will Lucignan, &c. ſo you would Shylock. You may keep to yourſelf, in all probability, the firſt rank as an actor, even if you give countenance to merit. But ſuppoſe you ſhould not keep that rank: if you open your doors, and welcome genius with cordiality: if by your means, men of ſuperior talents ſhould be induced to look towards that walk which has been hitherto forbidden by falſe religion, abſurd cuſtom, and a variety of other cauſes: — you will do yourſelf greater honour than you can ever acquire as a meer actor. You will be deſervedly ranked among the beſt benefactors of the world; for you will promote public virtue and public happineſs. The principles and manners of your fellow-ſubjects might be greatly in your power. Church-men are indolent or timid; they take no ſteps to-

wards obtaining a proper influence on the public morality. They continue the uſe of a long, heavy, confuſed ſervice, which they deſpiſe or ſleep over; and their churches are, as they deſerve to be, deſerted. The excellent morals ſcattered through our plays, and the advantages they have from action and muſic, have made our play-houſes almoſt the only ſchools of virtue. What would that man deſerve, who would improve them in the beſt manner?—Who would diſregard a mean intereſt, or any ſuggeſtions of ſelfiſhneſs, and act on a plan of real generoſity and public ſpirit? You, Sir, might be that man. It is to induce you to become ſuch, that I write to you. Furniſh your houſe with a greater number of good actors than you now have; and render the drama, what it ought to be, the rational entertainment of the public. I will then ſound your praiſes in the ears of the people; and your name ſhall be tranſmitted to poſterity with laſting honor.

But

But if you proceed in the errors you have lately run into; if you keep your houſe with only a few good actors, and hold the public in ſuſpence about yourſelf; appearing only now and then as a regale: if to amuſe and injure, inſtead of entertaining and doing ſervice to the public, you will give us Inſtallations, and Jubilees, and Peeps behind the Curtain, what can you expect? For myſelf, I am willing to warn before I ſtrike. I ſhall be helped by your future behavior to further lights into your character, and will take my meaſures according as you improve the hints I now give you. I am not haſty in making my eſtimate; but you will find me warm in my indignation, if I ſhould be brought to believe the truth of ſome ſuggeſtions againſt you. I have avoided the informations of a Giffard; at whoſe name, it is ſaid, you tremble. Your tranſaction with Macklin, I have only ſlightly attended to; and many other inſtances of *conduct* and

management

management, which may make a conſiderable figure when the biographer ſhall perpetuate to poſterity *The Life of Garrick*. I ſhall think it my duty to undertake the diſagreeable taſk of ſearching into your faults; laying them open to the world; and doing what I can to deſtroy an influence which you employ to the public diſadvantage. I ſhall be ſorry to be in any degree the means of your loſing the harveſt of your labours, and eſpecially as you are haſtening to that time of life when every man ſtands in need of it. You will probably have more than juſtice done on you. Your gray-hairs will be plucked by many an impertinent hand; but without blame, becauſe in a laudable reſentment; and you will be *brought down with ſorrow to your grave.*

I cannot ſay much of myſelf, as I do not ſubſcribe my name. You will know who I am in good time. My reaſon for concealing myſelf now is,

that

that I may not be embarraſſed by any perſonal applications; and may be at liberty to purſue my intentions with that impartiality and juſtice, which the public, and which you have a right to expect. When that is done, you will be very welcome to all the knowledge of me which can poſſibly be had; and you may rank me among your friends or your enemies according as you ſhall think beſt.

I am, Sir, your ſincere admirer, and moſt humble ſervant,

The AUTHOR.
(B. Williams.)